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1. Women and Memory – the *Iliad* and the *Kosovo Cycle*

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The Homeric epics are inextricably linked with ideas of remembering and memorialising. Originating as oral poems, their transmission at least at an early stage was dependent on the memory of the bard; studies such as those of Minchin, Bakker and Clay have drawn on cognitive psychology to explore the mnemonic methods used by the bards to recall the poems and to keep them consistent in reperformance.¹ That the epics create a shared memory of the past has been the focus of studies in cultural memory and intentional history such as those of Assmann and more recently Gehrke and Grethlein.² Homeric memory simultaneously separates the heroes of the past from the ‘men who are now’ (οἱοι νῦν βροτοί εἰς’, *Il.* 5.304, 12.383, 449, 20.287) and bridges this gap by *enacting* the past to bring it into the present.³ The very theme of the *Iliad*, the ‘glorious deeds of men and gods’ (κλέα ἀνδρῶν τε θεῶν τε), is a product of memory; glorious deeds are memorialised and perpetuated through the medium of poetry itself – and all of this stems from the Muses, daughters of Memory.

This chapter focuses on one particular aspect of Homeric memory, more specifically memorialisation: the way in which women in the *Iliad* act as vessels for the preservation of memory. It examines the narrative strategies the poet adopts to treat the relationship between memory and women, and argues that women, who are nominally characters with limited agency in Homeric epic, memorialise their men through words and objects, but also *as* objects.⁴ In a further step, this chapter shows that this characterisation of women as vessels of memory is not unique to Homer, or indeed the Greek tradition, by exploring the relationship between women and memory

¹ Minchin 2001, Bakker 2005 and Clay 2011. We may note, with Clay 2011: 118, an early link between mnemonics and memorialisation: the ‘discovery’ of mnemonics has been traditionally attributed to Simonides, who used the mnemonic technique of *loci* to remember a set of dinner guests and in the process preserved their memory.

² e.g. Assmann 1992 (2011); Gehrke 2010; Grethlein 2010.

³ Bakker 2002.

⁴ For further discussion of the commemorative function of women and their objects, and specifically the *limitations* of both, see Canevaro forthcoming, a study which forms part of my wider work on ‘Women and Objects in Greek Epic’ (project funded by the Leverhulme Trust).

in South Slavic songs. It concludes with a consideration of the type of memory preserved by these women, in contrast with that preserved by epic itself.

The *Iliad*'s war-time setting naturally foregrounds loss and memorialisation, and poses specific challenges to the depiction of women. The differentiated gender roles inherent in warfare highlight the restricted agency of women, in contrast to their men who repeatedly choose to fight.⁵ This restriction means that the narrative approach has to change to accommodate women when they become the focus of attention. Rather than relating glorious deeds, when the poets turn to women they offer more static moments of reflection on memory and loss. It is because they remember and articulate loss that the women act as vessels for the preservation of the memory of those who have died; but they also become memorials through their bodily survival. Such distinct gender roles are evident also in South Slavic epic, which is a useful comparandum, not only in terms of context and techniques of performance, but also from a thematic point of view:⁶ the *Kosovo Cycle* too is set in war-time and shares with the *Iliad* the challenges to the narrative posed by women.⁷

As a number of scholars have emphasised, inasmuch as they are agents Iliadic women often appear occupied with weaving, which in itself can become a means of memorialisation.⁸ Weaving epitomises the Homeric ideal of domestic stability and conversely can come to symbolise the disruption of the household brought about by war. At *Iliad* 6.490-2 Hector delineates gender roles and sets up the activity of weaving as a foil for warfare when he commands Andromache:⁹

⁵ It is well noted that Odyssean women, because of the poem's peace-time setting, have more agency than their Iliadic counterparts. Penelope, for example, controls events at home in her husband's absence, and Odysseus is constantly at the mercy of one strong female character or another. Without war as the driving force, gender roles are not quite so starkly delineated, or at least are differentiated in different terms.

⁶ South Slavic epic, like the Homeric poems, originated as an oral tradition. As recently as the 1930s Milman Parry was able to experience it as 'a still living oral poetry' (Lord 1954: 3) though the tradition has now declined. Most bards now perform in an artificial context, reciting songs learned from books rather than through oral transmission. For a recent study see I. Petrovic 2016.

⁷ The corpus of songs is comprised of a number of 'Cycles': the most prominent are the Kosovo cycle (with which this chapter is concerned), the heroic Marko cycle, fifteenth- to nineteenth-century songs about outlaws and border raiders, and a later surge of new material following the first Serbian uprising in 1804.

⁸ See for instance Snyder 1981, Pantelia 1993, Scheid and Svenbro 1996, Clayton 2004 and Mueller 2010.

⁹ On gender roles in *Iliad* 6 see esp. Arthur Katz 1981, Graziosi and Haubold 2010: 29-32.

ἀλλ' εἰς οἶκον ἰοῦσα τὰ σ' αὐτῆς ἔργα κόμιζε,
ἱστὸν τ' ἡλακάτην τε, καὶ ἀμφιπόλοισι κέλευε
ἔργον ἐποίχεσθαι· πόλεμος δ' ἄνδρεςσι μελήσει

Go therefore back to our house, and take up your own work,
the loom and the distaff, and see to it that your handmaidens
ply their work also; but the men must see to the fighting.¹⁰

At *Iliad* 6.456 Hector fears that after the fall of Troy Andromache will be taken away to work at another loom:¹¹ that transferral of Andromache and, crucially, her weaving for another family will symbolize the end of Hector's household. She is treated both as an object herself, to be taken away as part of the spoils of war, and as a creator of objects, valuable and integral to the home.

In the hands of a small number of exceptional female characters weaving can do more than signify domestic continuity. In *Iliad* 3 Helen memorialises the story of the Trojan war by weaving it, assuming a role akin to that of the poet, whilst Penelope commemorates her husband by delaying the completion of her weaving.¹² In fact, it is fitting that Penelope's situation operates in reverse: she memorialises through *unweaving* because, unlike the Iliadic women whose men are fated to die in battle, she is intent on preserving the memory of her *living* husband. In her case, it is the *completion* of the weaving which threatens domestic upheaval and the oblivion of Odysseus in Ithaca.¹³ This diversity of the memorialising potential of weaving is brought out most pointedly by comparing Helen in *Iliad* 3 with Andromache in *Iliad* 22. Both women are said to be in the inner palace, weaving patterns into double-folded purple garments.¹⁴ However, the subject matter of their weaving is very different, and characteristic of their respective situations: Andromache weaves

¹⁰ The *Iliad* text is that of West 1998 and 2000; all *Iliad* translations are from Lattimore 1951.

¹¹ καὶ κεν ἐν Ἀργεὶ ἐοῦσα πρὸς ἄλλης ἱστὸν ὑφαίνοις.

¹² See Mueller 2007.

¹³ This idea of an eternal present and a perpetual remaking is so dominant in the poem that, as Clayton 2004 notes, many later interpretations of the *Odyssey* and indeed much Homeric scholarship itself seems almost to forget that Penelope does eventually complete her weaving

¹⁴ Inner palace: *Il.* 3.125 ἐν μεγάροις, clarified at *Il.* 3.142 ὡρμάτ' ἐκ θαλάμοιο; 22.440 μυχῶι δόμου ὑψηλοῖο. Pantelia 1993:494 notes the importance of privacy: 'weavers could isolate themselves and perform their art away from the public eye'. The garments: *Il.* 3.126 δίπλακα μαρμαρέην, 22.441 δίπλακα πορφυρέην.

flowers, motifs appropriate to the domestic sphere and with connotations of life and hope which contrast with the events unfolding outside the walls and reflect Andromache's naïveté;¹⁵ Helen weaves scenes from the Trojan war. She intrudes into the martial male sphere and her awareness of the events unfolding around her both marks a contrast with Andromache and indicates her unique status within the *Iliad*.¹⁶ Within the wider framework of the *Iliad* these episodes have a structural importance: they connect the third and third-last books and parallel the first battle with the last one.¹⁷ Both women have, at different levels, a similar purpose in the *Iliad*: Helen caused the war, and is the reason why the deeds of men will be remembered; Andromache is there to preserve the memory of her man. Helen in her weaving preserves memory of the Trojan war using her privileged knowledge in a way that at the same time is appropriate to and subverts the domestic female sphere. She also manages to establish some *kleos* for herself *en route*, as she is said to weave the conflicts suffered on account of her (3.128 οὐς ἔθεν εἶνεκ' ἔπασχον).¹⁸ In contrast, Andromache weaves in ignorance and so her creation stands as no memorial of war: it would be – but in the circumstances cannot become – a symbol of peaceful domesticity. The subject of Andromache's weaving reflects her naïveté, on which the poet explicitly comments when he calls her νηπίη at 22.445.¹⁹ Her act of memorialising, in the tragic situation in which she finds herself, is not in the form of her weaving, but in her decision to burn the robes she has made when she hears Hector is dead.²⁰ This act represents the end of Andromache's own life and activity in Troy – even if she carries on living.

¹⁵ De Jong 2012 s.v. notes that though the etymology of θρόνα is obscure, already in antiquity it was taken to mean either 'decorations' or 'flowers': cf. the scholia on this passage. The poet explicitly comments on this naïveté when he calls her νηπίη (Graziosi and Haubold 2010: 30 translate 'poor innocent') at *Il.* 22.445.

¹⁶ See for example other points in *Iliad* 3: she is casually visited by Iris, she and her attendants are given epithets more appropriate to goddesses, and she assumes a bard-like position in the teichoskopia (3.178-244).

¹⁷ The point about books may appear arbitrary, given that the very idea of book division is a later construct, but it is the clearest way in which to express proportion in the text as it became fixed and transmitted.

¹⁸ Similarly, in *Odyssey* 15 she gives Telemachus a robe she has woven which will act as 'a monument (μνῆμα) to the hands of Helen' (15.126). For discussion of Helen's weaving for *kleos*, see Mueller 2010.

¹⁹ Graziosi/Haubold 2010:30 translate 'poor innocent'.

²⁰ *Il.* 22.512 ἀλλ' ἦτοι τά γε πάντα καταφλέξω πυρὶ κηλέωι. This observation is made in Easterling 1991: 149. See further below.

Andromache's life without her husband is predicted by Hector himself at *Iliad* 6.454-65. He expresses his vision in epigrammatic mode (460-1):²¹

Ἔκτορος ἦδε γυνή, ὃς ἀριστεύεσκε μάχεσθαι
Τρώων ἵπποδάμων, ὅτε Ἴλιον ἀμφεμάχοντο.

This is the wife of Hektor, who was ever the bravest fighter
of the Trojans, breakers of horses, in the days when they fought about Ilion.

An epigram acts as 'a machine for producing *kleos*'.²² This epigram performs just such a role, memorialising Hector and his achievements. However, the 'reading' of this epigram is not initiated by the stone on which it is carved, but by the presence of Andromache herself – she perpetuates her husband's memory by her very existence. She takes the place of a monument, a tomb or a *sema*: 'Like a monument, she provokes a response in those who see her'.²³ That she must be seen is key;²⁴ for an epigram to have its effect it must be 'read', as 'in a culture where *kléos* has a fundamental part to play, what is written remains incomplete until such time as it is provided with a voice'.²⁵ So for Andromache to preserve her husband's memory her shame and fall from glory must be witnessed and discussed. This is not easy to bear – neither for Andromache nor for Hector himself, who breaks down when he contemplates Andromache's future. Not only is a woman expected to stay behind, wait and, ultimately, grieve, but she also becomes the mechanism by which heroes preserve their heroic deeds: a constant physical reminder of her own loss. Svenbro

²¹ The lines are called an epigram by [Plutarch] *On Homer* II ch. 215; see also ΣbT ad 6.460b Erbse, Elmer 2005. On tracing the first allusions to epigram back to Homer see Baumbach-Petrovic-Petrovic 2010: 7. For detailed discussion of epigrams in Homer (and Homeric language in epigrams), focusing on the two epigrams imagined by Hector, see A. Petrovic 2016. Clay 2016 uses Hector's sepulchral epigram in *Iliad* 7 to reflect on epic's awareness of writing.

²² Svenbro 1993: 164.

²³ Scodel 1992: 59. Also Graziosi and Haubold 2010 ad 460-1: 'Andromache functions as a σῆμα, a living memorial of Hector's past achievements in war'. The importance of *semata* is noted by Grethlein 2008: 29 who describes them as 'spatially sanctified acts of memory'.

²⁴ That Andromache must be *seen* is significant, as for the Greeks to see, rather than to hear, is to know: see esp. Snell 1924 for the visual nature of Greek epistemology.

²⁵ Svenbro 1993: 44.

asks: ‘Is it really possible for one individual to be the *mnêma* of another?’²⁶ In the case of the widowed Andromache, the answer is yes. As inscribed epigrams ‘constitute a kind of literary “site of memory”’;²⁷ so Andromache herself, the uninscribed epigram’s very context, becomes a living *lieu de mémoire*.

As the women become living monuments, memorialising *as* objects, so the objects surrounding them share their function and allow the women to memorialise *through* objects. There has been a surge of recent scholarly interest in how objects shape memory: for example Grethlein provided a systematic overview of commemorative objects in the Homeric epics.²⁸ This chapter adds to such analyses by showing how objects linked to the women’s world fit with the narrative tone adopted in response to the women’s limited agency.²⁹ The abundance of objects suggests the absence of human agents;³⁰ the objects, and indeed the women, point to the absence of the men who are destined never to return. In *Iliad* 22 Andromache expresses her grief through objects, the only thing over which she, as a woman confined to the domestic sphere, has control. First, when she hears lamentation from the walls ‘the shuttle dropped from her hand to the ground’ (22.448 χαμαὶ δέ οἱ ἔκπεσε κερκίς). Weaving in epic, as we have seen, symbolises domestic stability and continuity. The dropping of the shuttle, therefore, signifies impending domestic upheaval: Andromache fears not only for her husband’s life but also for her domestic stability.³¹

Second, when Andromache sees that her husband is dead she faints (22.466-7), dropping her headdress (22.468). As the scholiast comments, this reminder of old happiness emphasises Andromache’s pitiful predicament: the headdress symbolises marriage, its loss the marriage’s end and ensuing grief.³² The physical description of the headdress is elaborate, culminating in the veil which ‘is in itself a symbol of

²⁶ Svenbro 1993: 93.

²⁷ Baumbach-Petrovic-Petrovic 2010: 9-10; on *lieux de mémoire* cf. Nora 1984-92.

²⁸ Grethlein 2008. See also Crielaard 2003, Bassi 2005, Hartmann 2010.

²⁹ Mueller 2010 offers another gendered analysis of Homeric objects, with a focus on the memorialising potential of women’s objects in the *Odyssey*.

³⁰ Here I hint at a model of human-object entanglement, the result of which is that solitary objects evoke their human ‘counterparts’. Furthermore, the term ‘agent’ is a complex and loaded one which would require unpacking. Both these issues can be clarified by use of New Materialist theory – but this is beyond the scope of the current chapter, and must be left for my wider project and other publications emerging from it.

³¹ Cf. Pantelia 1993: 496.

³² Σ bT *ad* 22.468-72 Erbse.

marriage’, and Homer adds to it by giving the story of its origin.³³ The episode is important structurally, as it reinforces the link between this scene and the scene of Hector’s departure in *Iliad* 6.³⁴ There (6.413-40) we hear of Andromache’s past, how her father Eetion was killed by Achilles leaving her without a family and therefore totally dependent on her husband Hector; here, in a complex rearrangement of the same elements, while Hector is being killed by Achilles, Andromache expresses her grief through an object given to her in Eetion’s house, on the occasion of her marriage. In a further link, the removal of the headdress also echoes the poignant scene of Hector taking off his helmet and putting it on the floor at 6.472-3.³⁵ The object is of symbolic importance to Hector ‘of the shining helmet’, and takes on its resonance precisely when Hector is furthest from the male sphere (the battlefield) and closest to the female.³⁶ The episode also emphasises the bride-price paid for her, important here because of the change in fortune Andromache predicts after her husband’s death. It serves as a reminder of Andromache’s value as an object herself, a commodity: one which, after Hector’s death, might very well re-enter the market. Furthermore, the fall of the headdress serves to link Andromache’s grief with that of Hecabe earlier in the book, as when she hears of her son’s death she ‘threw the shining veil far from her’ (22.406-7 ἀπὸ δὲ λιπαρὴν ἔρριψε καλύπτρην| τηλόσε). In both cases, the act of throwing away head-gear marks a turning point: Andromache’s move from wife to widow, and Hecabe’s from mother to mother-in-mourning.³⁷

³³ Richardson 1990-3: 157. Although the veil can be used in any everyday context (a woman would cover her head when leaving the house), here it is being used for particular poignant effect. Cf. Grethlein 2008: 40: ‘The presence of the past in material goods is often used by the Homeric narrator to create additional meaning and to highlight the narrative’. Grethlein also usefully provides a list of so-called ‘biographical objects’ in the Homeric poems.

³⁴ Connections noted by e.g. Graziosi and Haubold 2010 *ad* 6.417-20, 417. For a sensitive reading of *Iliad* 22 alongside book 6, particularly in terms of formulaic and non-formulaic elements, see Segal 1971. Grethlein 2007 takes up this question of formulae, considering how much the scene in *Iliad* 22 owes to the bathing type scene.

³⁵ ἀπὸ κρατός 6.472 and 22.468.

³⁶ Arthur Katz 1981: 31.

³⁷ There is, however, an important difference: whilst Hecabe threw off her καλύπτρην, Andromache discards her κοῦρην. This latter word is used both of Andromache’s headdress and of the towers of Troy (*Il.*16.100 Τροίης ἱερὰ κοῦρην), a lexical crossover which forges a strong connection between woman and city, and more specifically between the downfall of both. For a discussion of Homeric *kredemna*, see Scully 1990.

In a final expression of grief, Andromache vows to burn Hector's clothes. Taken in relation to her weaving, this act frames the whole scene of Andromache's realisation: her vow to destroy the clothes (22.510-14) stands in stark contrast with the domestic stability expressed by her weaving in blissful ignorance (22.440-1). Though by weaving a garment and preparing a bath Andromache is foreshadowing the impending funeral rites in which Hector's body will be washed, anointed, and clothed, she does so unknowingly; that she intends the clothing solely for her *living* husband is made evident by her intention to burn the clothes once she hears he is dead. The clothing symbolises two ideals: one, domestic security in life; the other, a decent burial in death (the contrast not between alive and dead, but between γυμνόν in death and decently shrouded). At this point in the narrative, Hector is deprived of both. Andromache therefore vows to burn the garments: female objects (made by χερσὶ γυναικῶν) over which she has control. She believes this is the best way to bring Hector *kleos*. Here Andromache's grief and obligation drive her to act, to strive to play some role following Hector's death. And this is a dramatic statement, as the destruction of woven objects born of a long, laborious creative process is no small thing. As Mueller 2016:46 writes: 'In societies where human hands laboriously produce every thread of a garment, clothing does not merely symbolize wealth – it *is* wealth.'

The ultimate expression of the women's grief at the loss of their men is lamentation.³⁸ Such laments usually follow the epic convention of an 'ascending scale of affection' with a crescendo culminating in the wife's lament.³⁹ In family-focused *Iliad* 22 this is indeed the case: Andromache's lament is left until last, further emphasised by the dramatic delay while news reaches her. In 'universal and transcendent' *Iliad* 24, however, Andromache goes first and unexpectedly leaves the

³⁸ I refer here only to the γόοι of the kinswomen, excluding from my analysis the θούροι of the professional mourners: for more on this distinction see Alexiou 1974: 102. See further Alexiou 1974: 133 and 161 on the conventional nature of the laments in *Il.* 24; Easterling 1991. On male laments in the *Iliad*, see below.

³⁹ Arthur Katz 1981: 27 (following Kakrides 1949): 'Its outstanding feature is the elevation of conjugal love over the love of friends and relatives'. Richardson 1990-3: 350 disagrees: 'it is natural that [Andromache] should lead the laments'. Either way, one should note that although she is not given the climactic position in the speeches, her actions mark her out as the chief mourner who 'usually clasps the head of the dead man with both hands' (Alexiou 1974: 6).

final and prime spot open for Helen.⁴⁰ This is less a reflection on Andromache's importance and more a characterisation of Helen and her role in the poem. Pantelia rightly claims that Helen's position in the order of laments is dictated 'by virtue of her particular understanding of the importance of heroic *kleos* and poetry as the means for conferring it'.⁴¹ Indeed, throughout the *Iliad*, Helen is characterised by her elevated status and her appearances are linked with poetry and an awareness of its potential as a tool for the preservation of memory.⁴² Helen's sustained interest in *kleos* throughout the *Iliad* makes her the ideal character to conclude the poem, even over Hector's own wife: we will see below that this prioritising of *kleos* over the usual form of lament is linked with the different types of memory preserved by each.

Andromache in both her laments speaks not just as a wife, but as a mother. She speaks little of Hector himself and, although she refers in each lament to her widowhood, the majority of her lament is given over to the fate of their son Astyanax. This could of course be a way of enhancing the pathos of the situation, focusing on the youngest and most vulnerable victim; but I suggest it also provides a further connection with the female act of memorialising. Svenbro writes: 'the Greeks believed humans could achieve immortality in two ways: through "generation" (*genesis*) or through "renown" (*kléos*)'.⁴³ I have shown that Andromache shows less interest in *kleos* than does Helen; generation is the focus of her speech. Through procreation and the continuation of Hector's line she preserves his memory, and her concern for her son's future is inextricably linked to a concern for memorialising her husband.

It should be noted that lament is not an exclusively female expression in the *Iliad*; it is only predominantly so. There are some important male laments, such as Achilles for Patroclus and Priam for Hector, which in formulation have much in common with the female laments.⁴⁴ However, as Gagliardi has shown, they are very different in their effect, and in fact this difference highlights the distinct gender roles in the

⁴⁰ Pantelia 2002: 25. Helen also appears in sequence with these women in the pleas to Hector in *Iliad* 6; there the order was Hecabe, Helen, Andromache.

⁴¹ Pantelia 2002: 21.

⁴² See 3.121-8 weaving, 3.146-244 *teichoskopia*, 6.318-68 comforting Hector.

⁴³ Svenbro 1993: 65.

⁴⁴ Achilles' lament for Patroclus: *Il.* 18.324-42, 19.315-37; Priam's lament for Hector: *Il.* 22.415-28.

poem.⁴⁵ The female laments are an end in themselves; an expression of grief which does not translate into action. Women can express themselves only through words (and, as we have seen, objects). The male laments, by contrast, propel the men into action; they are a means to an end: vengeance and, ultimately, *kleos*. Furthermore, whilst the women use their lament to memorialise the dead, the men often use their lament as an impetus to seek glory not for the fallen but for themselves.⁴⁶ Thus, the difference in the way men and women lament maps onto a more general gendered difference in the male and female mechanisms of memorialisation.

A comparison with South Slavic epic demonstrates that the relationship between women and memory is configured in a similar way in that oral tradition – partly because women perform a similar social role.⁴⁷ Since Milman Parry’s ground-breaking work, comparisons between Greek and South Slavic epic have been well established.⁴⁸ Most of Parry and Lord’s work, and indeed much of the work they inspired, focused on compositional techniques. Thematic comparisons feature too, but they often emerge when discussing larger compositional building blocks such as type scenes and narrative patterns. Their analyses also focused primarily on the corpus of Muslim songs. What I propose to offer here is a comparison between Greek and South Slavic epic which adopts a thematic approach, focusing on the depiction of women and which, precisely because it is the lesser frequented by Classicists, concentrates on the Christian *corpus*.

The Kosovo cycle is based around a key event in Serbian history: the defeat of the Serbs and their allies by the Turks at Kosovo on 15th June 1389.⁴⁹ Women are central

⁴⁵ For analyses see Gagliardi 2007: 191-207. She argues that these male laments are probably not true to life, but are a poetic construct with female laments used as a model.

⁴⁶ Gagliardi 2007: 194.

⁴⁷ Of course, this is not the only tradition with which comparisons can be drawn. One might similarly use as a comparandum the women of Mani, for example, on which see Seremetakis 1991. For a comparison with this nexus as presented by Tennyson and the Pre-Raphaelites see Canevaro 2014.

⁴⁸ See e.g. Lord 1954, Parry 1971. Note, however, that the focus of Parry and Lord’s fieldwork was the Muslim subgenre, rather than the Christian songs with which I am primarily concerned here. The examples I use in this chapter come from the branch of the tradition alternatively known as Serbo-Croatian. I use the term ‘South Slavic’, however, following the logic of e.g. Foley 1996: ‘Although “South Slavic” is employed by linguists to denote the language family that also includes Bulgarian, Slovenian and Macedonian, it seems best to err on the side of inclusiveness rather than of parochialism or segregation’. In the analysis that follows, I have used the translations of Rootham 1920.

⁴⁹ There is some debate over the exact details of this battle, as historical information is limited; much is reconstructed from the songs themselves, and from accounts of contemporaneous battles. The

to some of these songs and give their names to their poems; however, even in these instances they are portrayed as powerless, left alone in the domestic sphere whilst the men go off to fight and, ultimately, to die. In the *Maiden of Kossovo* a girl wanders the battlefield in the bloody aftermath, seeking the hero who pledged to marry her upon his return. As she tends the wounds of a soldier, he reveals that her betrothed and his companions lie among the dead – she must return home alone. In the *Death of the Mother of the Jugovitch* God allows a woman to fly to the battlefield, where she sees her nine fallen sons and dead husband but manages to keep calm. She then faces her sons' widows and children, but still holds firm. The next day two bloodstained ravens drop into her bosom the severed hand of her son. She is finally overwhelmed with grief and her heart breaks. In *Tsar Lazar and Tsaritsa Militsa*, a song thematically related to the preceding one as Militsa is the sister of the Jugovitch, Militsa begs her brothers to keep away from the battle. Despite having Prince Lazar's blessing to stay behind, all choose instead an honourable death; even the servant refuses to stay at home. News of the battle's grim outcome is brought to Militsa first by two black ravens, then by a servant carrying his right hand in his left.

The fundamental difference between the male and female spheres in the songs of the Kosovo cycle, as in the *Iliad*, lies in the element of choice. The men have 'a masculine epic idiom of action';⁵⁰ they can choose whether or not to fight, can choose between an earthly or heavenly kingdom, to die an honourable death or to live a shameful life. That the brothers in *Tsar Lazar and Tsaritsa Militsa* choose martyrs' deaths over inglorious lives as cowards closely resembles the choice made by Achilles and other Iliadic heroes.⁵¹ The speech Sarpedon delivers in *Iliad* 12 (310-28), for example, outlines why he and Glaukos should choose to face death in the first line of battle, and in *Iliad* 6 Hector insists 'I would feel deep shame before the Trojans, and the Trojan women with trailing garments, if like a coward I were to shrink aside from the fighting' (6.441-3). The women are not confronted with such choices in the Greek and South Slavic traditions.

Serbian empire may not have fallen until 1459 but this battle was seen, from soon after the event itself, as a crucial turning point.

⁵⁰ Koljević 1980: 168.

⁵¹ *Iliad* 9.410-16 Achilles reveals the choice he made. See Graziosi and Haubold 2004: 104.

In the Kosovo cycle and *Iliad* 6 the outcome of the battle is predetermined. Both the male and female characters are aware of this – Hector knows that ‘there will come a day when sacred Ilion shall perish’ (6.448 ἔσσεται ἡμαρ ὅτ’ ἂν ποτ’ ὀλώληι Ἴλιος ἰοή) and Andromache warns that ‘presently the Achaeans, gathering together, will set upon you and kill you’ (6.409-10 τάχα γάρ σε κατακτενέουσιν Ἀχαιοὶ ἅπαντες ἐφορμηθέντες). But where the men choose to go into battle as doomed heroes or martyrs, all the women can do is try in vain to avert disaster. Tsaritsa Militsa begs ‘Leave me one at least of these my brothers, That I have a brother left to swear by’ (12-13) and Andromache pleads with Hector, begging him to ‘stay here on the rampart’ (6.431 αὐτοῦ μίμν’ ἐπὶ πύργῳ).

The values of the respective heroes are formulated slightly differently. Hector’s main concern is with *kleos*:

ἐπεὶ μάθον ἔμμεναι ἐσθλός
αἰεὶ καὶ πρότοισι μετὰ Τρώεσσι μάχεσθαι,
ἄρνύμενος πατρός τε μέγα κλέος ἦδ’ ἐμὸν αὐτοῦ.

I have learned to be valiant
and to fight always among the foremost ranks of the Trojans,
winning for my own self great glory, and for my father. (*Il.* 6.444-6)

The heroes of Kosovo are intent upon the honourable cross and the heavenly kingdom; Tsaritsa Militsa’s second brother, for example, intends ‘to shed his blood for Christ his honour, For the Holy Cross to fight and perish’ (66-7). This difference stems from the very nature of the two conflicts; whilst the Achaeans and the Trojans share the same pantheon, the Kosovo Cycle tells of a religious war in which Christians battle Muslims and the ultimate goal is to ensure the superiority of one faith over the other. There are similarities between the two traditions, however, as both involve an element of memorialisation. *Kleos* may be the achievement of ‘acoustic renown’ *par excellence*,⁵² but martyrdom can have the same lasting impact: in *Tsar Lazar and Tsaritsa Militsa* Milosh ‘left glory to the name of Serbia, While

⁵² To use the formulation of Svenbro 1993: 164.

there lives a people and Kossovo' (190-1). Whatever the concern of their men, the predicament of the women is the same: with the possible exception of Helen, they have little option of self-memorialisation. The closest they can come to a martyr's death is by proxy – indeed the fate of their men on the battlefield does sometimes prove the death of them: the Mother of the Jugovitch dies of heartbreak when she sees the gory evidence of her family's demise, and Andromache considers this possibility when she says 'for me it would be far better to sink into the earth when I have lost you' (6.410-11 ἐμοὶ δέ κε κέρδιον εἴη| σεῖ' ἀφ' αμαρτούσῃ χθόνα δύμεναι).

This gender divide is physically manifest in both the *Iliad* and the Kosovo cycle. 'The Scaean gates separate two radically different worlds, and they are the dividing line between city and battlefield';⁵³ appropriately, this is where Hector and Andromache part. In *Iliad* 6 Hector commands her 'Go therefore back to our house, and take up your own work' (6.490), and in *Iliad* 22 she learns of her husband's death while she is on the battlements. Similarly, Militsa's brother bids her 'Go Militsa, to thy fair white tower' (58), and she 'comes down from her white slender tower' (127) to hear the news from the ravens: she is as removed from the action as Andromache on the battlement. In the *Maiden of Kossovo* the wounded hero urges 'return thee to thy fair white castle' (130), after he asks the maiden in surprise 'What dost thou upon the field of battle?' (33) – her presence in the military sphere is hardly to be expected, and is only accepted because she forms part of the aftermath rather than the battle itself.

Broader parallels can be drawn between Andromache and Tsaritsa Militsa, two young wives: in Militsa's pleading she focuses on her own family as does Andromache in her pleas in *Iliad* 6; both try to keep their menfolk back from battle; both faint at a point of high emotion; and both receive their bad news when abandoned at home. Similarly Hector's mother Hecabe and the Mother of the Jugovitch bear some resemblance: both in their laments focus on one son out of many, and are concerned with the inversion of the natural order symbolised by the loss of their children.

⁵³ Arthur Katz 1981: 20. On Homer's use of spatial markers see esp. Clay 2011 – she also makes the compelling observation that whereas on the battlefield (i.e. the male sphere) locations are spatial, in the female sphere they are emotional (41).

Just as Andromache in *Iliad* 22, powerless to change the course of events on the battlefield, expresses her grief through objects, the sections of the Kosovo songs which focus on the female characters, after the men have left, are characterised more by symbolic language than by narrative. As Koljević comments, ‘instead of telling a story these poems enact a tragic drama of the mind, and this gives rise to their epic idiom in which tokens and symbols work out their ominous forebodings’.⁵⁴ The *Death of the Mother of the Jugovitch* is deeply symbolic from the outset (perhaps because of the extremity of the tragedy about to unfold); the Mother is given a falcon’s eyes and a swan’s wings, and the outcome of the battle is represented by two ravens carrying a severed hand. This is a ‘tale which unfolds in pure retrospect of tokens of death’.⁵⁵ In *Tsar Lazar and Tsaritsa Militsa*, when the men have gone to battle the narrative language gives way to a sequence of images: instead of the heroes returning, ‘Flying, come two ravens, two black ravens’ (118); the servant comes carrying his right hand in his left (144); the dead are represented by many broken battle-lances (170). In both poems it is through a severed hand that the news is brought home: this gruesome token represents a passing of action, an end to the men’s ability to *do* anything, and it is now up to the women to act, though in a different, symbolic, way. In *The Maiden of Kossovo* the heroes give the maiden items by which to remember them (a mantle, a ring, a bracelet) and by the end of the song these men, and the narrative with them, are reduced to these tokens alone. The maiden is explicitly seen as a vessel for memory, as each hero says of his token ‘By it thou wilt keep me in remembrance’ (63) and ‘By this shall my name live with thee’ (111).

Lamentation as a predominantly female act also spans both traditions. Just as the *Iliad* closes on the funeral of Hector, so also at the end of the *Maiden of Kossovo* ‘From her white throat pour her lamentations’ (135), as the maiden contemplates her inability to save the lover she describes as a ‘young and tender sapling’ (137). In the *Mother of the Jugovitch* the widows are joined in their mourning by ‘lions’, horses and falcons which ‘roar their grief’ (20) and ‘scream in sorrow’ (22), and before her death the Mother whispers a lament to the hand of her son, her ‘fair green apple’ (78).

⁵⁴ Koljević 1980: 168

⁵⁵ Koljević 1980: 172.

Although women in the Homeric and South Slavic epics preserve the memory of their men, this preservation lasts only for as long as the women themselves continue to live. The women can only offer short-term, imperfect memory. Lament has been shown by Derderian to be a ‘synchronic oral genre’, in contrast to epic which is diachronic, as the commemorative function of lament does not operate beyond a one-off extemporaneous performance.⁵⁶ Lament alone cannot constitute a memorial, but needs poetry to preserve it: as Pantelia notes, ‘the laments themselves, as songs embedded in the epic narrative, contribute to the primary function of epic poetry, which is to preserve the memory of the hero beyond the limitations of his society’.⁵⁷ In short, laments are themselves only synchronic (i.e. they happen soon after death), but can contribute to diachronic memory. It is for this reason that Helen’s lament is so incongruously prioritised in *Iliad* 24: she is the most aware of *kleos* and its diachronic potential. It is for this reason too that when Iliadic men express their lament they do not stop there, but use it as an impetus to *kleos*-seeking action, and heroes in the Kosovo cycle depend not on a single lament but on a story to be told again and again, ‘while there lives a people and Kossovo’.

As Grethlein has shown, the commemorative function of objects does not stand the test of time: ‘the fragility and ambiguity of material relics and the eternity of the poetic tradition highlight each other in their discrepancy’.⁵⁸ That Andromache remembers Hector by *destroying* his clothes epitomises this transience of objects. Epigram should properly be a ‘diachronic supplement to lament’;⁵⁹ but the epigrammatic role of women is enacted by a ‘reading’ of the *woman*, not of an inscription in stone. As in the case of the other Iliadic non-*sema*, that which Hector imagines at *Il.* 7.73-93, *kleos* is perpetuated not by the *sema* itself but by the poetry in which it is memorialised.⁶⁰ Though women in the *Iliad* memorialise through objects *and* as epigrams, the two are never put together and so neither can last. Not even Helen’s woven memorial is as perfect as it seems: she weaves the struggles Τρώων θ’

⁵⁶ Derderian 2001: 10.

⁵⁷ Pantelia 2002: 23.

⁵⁸ Grethlein 2008: 35. For discussion of the limitations of women and objects as commemorators see further Canevaro forthcoming.

⁵⁹ Derderian 2001: 12. On written epigrams extending a person’s memory see e.g. Day 2010: 7.

⁶⁰ Hector proposes a duel and boasts that the Achaeans will erect a *sema* so that men of the future will hear about his victory; the duel, however, does not happen, and so the *sema* will never materialise. See Clay 2011: 58 n. 41 and further 119, now with Clay 2016,

ἵπποδάμων καὶ Ἀχαιῶν χαλκοχιτώνων (*Il.* 3.127 ‘of Trojans, breakers of horses, and bronze-armored Achaeans’) *before* Iris comes to her and takes her to see the amazing deeds Τρώων θ' ἵπποδάμων καὶ Ἀχαιῶν χαλκοχιτώνων (*Il.* 3.131). The order and repetition might point to Helen’s semi-divine status, her privileged knowledge that comes from something more than empirical experience; it may, however, suggest that when Helen weaves she does not yet see.⁶¹ When Iris calls Helen to the walls to tell Priam about the warriors down below, Helen’s knowledge is certainly marked as limited; she searches for her brothers (*Il.* 3.236-42), because she does not know what the poet tells us: that ‘the teeming earth lay already upon them’ (3.243 τοὺς δ' ἤδη κάτεχεν φυσίζοος αἶα). She might have been summoned for her privileged knowledge, but it only gets her so far – she is missing something. It seems likely, then, that a similar suggestion of limitation is operating also in the weaving passage. Like Andromache weaving in *Iliad* 22 when she has not yet heard of Hector’s death, Helen too in her weaving does not have all the information. Furthermore, Helen’s weaving itself is limited in that she does not complete it.⁶² Iris calls her away while she is weaving, interrupting the act itself and stalling the finished product. Ultimately Helen knows less than the poet does – and so the men continue to seek everlasting fame in poetry.⁶³

We still remember Andromache’s headdress, Hector’s epigram, Helen’s tapestry and Hecabe’s lament, but only because they have been preserved in Homer’s poem. Homeric women act as vessels for the preservation of memory in their own right for as long as they are alive, but for this memory to continue it must be immortalised through epic. To conclude with some examples from the *Odyssey*, when Penelope philosophises about *kleos* in *Odyssey* 19 she points out that men are short-lived (*Od.* 19.328 ἄνθρωποι δὲ μυνυθάδιοι τελέθουσιν). The adjective μυνυθάδιοι highlights the ephemerality of any mode of memorialization that depends on mortals. What we really need is reputation, rumour, *kleos*: things which can be transmitted orally after our death. When Agamemnon praises Penelope in *Odyssey* 24.195-8, he formulates Penelope’s achievement in terms of her remembering Odysseus.

⁶¹ The line is made up of formulaic elements, but it is not very common as it appears elsewhere only at *Il.* 3.251 and 8.71.

⁶² Unlike – lest we forget – Penelope.

⁶³ Graziosi and Haubold 2010: 6-7.

Throughout his long absence, memory of Odysseus is kept alive by the fidelity and constancy of his wife, and Penelope is explicitly praised for acting as a vessel for memory – she is even given *kleos* for it. However, for this *kleos* to last it must enter into song, and song fashioned by the immortals no less (197-8 τεύξουσιν δ' ἑπὶ χθονίοισιν αἰοιδὴν ἰθάνατοι). Even the most constant – or conniving – woman has her limitations.

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